



NEWS RELEASE

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Aug. 15, 2019

Woman Pleads Not Guilty to Carson Slaying, Kidnapping

A woman pleaded not guilty today for the April kidnapping and murder of a 32-year-old man in Carson, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office announced.

Maricela Mercado (dob 8/26/78) entered her plea to one count each of murder and kidnapping. She is expected to return to court on Sept. 17 for a preliminary hearing setting in Department 8 of the Los Angeles County Superior Court, Torrance Branch.

Co-defendant Roman Cerratos (dob 10/10/79) also has been charged with one count each of murder and kidnapping as well as possession of a firearm by a felon. He also faces special allegations that he personally used a handgun and a knife during the commission of the crime.

Cerratos and Mercado are accused of kidnapping Jeffrey Appel who was stabbed and fatally shot on April 16. The victim was found in his car in the 400 block of East Carson Plaza Drive in Carson.

Both defendants fled to Mexico where they were captured separately and brought back to the United States.

If convicted as charged, the defendants face up to life in state prison.

Case YA099545 remains under investigation by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department.

About the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to protecting our community through the fair and ethical pursuit of justice and the safeguarding of crime victims' rights.